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Care scandal 'that shames Britain' will see cash-strapped councils slash key services

Key council services could be slashed to the bone in a scandal that puts the UK to shame.

By **GILES SHELDRIK**

18:30, Tue, May 14, 2024



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Two thirds of 152 councils providing adult social care are confident of fulfilling duties (Image: Getty)



Cash-strapped councils are slashing key services as they struggle to care for older people in a scandal that “shames Britain”.

An audit reveals how many have been pushed to the brink servicing the growing needs of an elderly population.

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Only two thirds of the 152 councils providing adult social care say they are confident of meeting all legal duties next year, according to the Local Government Association [LGA].

This is despite 8 in 10 forecasting slashing spending on key community services like parks, libraries and leisure in a desperate scramble to keep heads above water.



Baroness Ros Altmann, 68, former pensions minister and older people's champion, said: "This report is a damning indictment of the political failure to finally reform our social care system, which is not fit for purpose. Leaving the responsibility for looking after increasing numbers of frail elderly people to cash-strapped councils is a **recipe** for disaster.



"More and more people are being left languishing without the care they need, unable to look after themselves and with nobody else to look after them either. Social care should be a national provision, not left to local authorities who simply cannot raise enough money to pay the rising bills.

"These elderly people are often unable to complain, nobody listens if they do and the system is the biggest failure of social policy in our lifetimes. Ten years on, no radical reforms are in place, despite legislation and promises to do better. This shames our country."

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The state of the nation snapshot follows "years of significant underfunding of adult social care services", according to the LGA which speaks for town halls across the country.

It also comes exactly 10 years after landmark legislation was introduced to improve access to vital care and support.

The Care Act makes it a legal right for people to receive services that prevent their needs from becoming more serious, have a range of high-quality and appropriate services to choose from, and are given timely information and advice to make good decisions about care and support.

Yet council chiefs have laid bare a litany of failures, all stemming from a lack of cash, that has seen an increasingly desperate public failed.

Analysis shows a rise in people needing to draw on care and support at a time of deep cuts to council funding that has left town halls "under increasing pressure to do more with less".

But the LGA says the biggest issues facing adult social care are greater than just severe funding shortages and include challenges recruiting and retaining a care workforce, more people with more complex needs and an inability to invest in preventative services to help people live independent lives and avoid the

need for more acute care.



The LGA: 'Hope for those needing care and support has faded' (Image: Getty)



David Fothergill, of the LGA, said: "We are at a critical point, for people who draw on care, councils and the sector. Councils are doing all they can to ensure they meet their duties under the Care Act - including cutting spending on other neighbourhood services - but many still fear they will not be able to over the coming years.

"This simply isn't good enough. It isn't good enough for people who draw on care and support and it isn't good enough for care workers who work incredibly hard for very little financial reward.

"Adult social care needs urgent attention. This must be top of the in-tray for any incoming government."

In 2022/23, total expenditure on adult social care rose to £28.4 billion - £2.7 billion more in real terms than in 2010/11.

The findings comes just a fortnight after the Daily Express revealed how thousands of vulnerable OAPs are at risk of being shunted into care against their wishes because of “shocking” home improvement delays which has seen many older and disabled people face unacceptable waits for home aids and adaptations. One of the longest was more than two years.